

Trails Across Kansas

The first roads in Kansas were just dusty trails. Buffalo made some of those trails. Herds of buffalo were looking for watering holes and rivers. They made trails as they walked. Indians also were looking for water. They followed the buffalo trails.

The second roads through Kansas were more dusty trails. Settlers moved in wagons along one trail. The Oregon-California Trail went through Kansas. Traders moved supplies from Missouri to New Mexico on another trail. They traveled on the Santa Fe Trail. Soldiers built roads. These military trails were used to send messages and supplies from fort to fort.

Next, more roads were made when people began to settle in Kansas. Between 1860 and 1890, more than 1.4 million people came to Kansas. They settled in cities and on farms. They needed roads to get from one place to another. These roads were made of dirt and gravel.





Then another change happened. The automobile was invented! Roads needed to be smooth, not bumpy. In 1915 Governor Arthur Capper proclaimed August 18 as Good Roads Day. On this day men with horse teams were asked to work on the roads. This practice continued on other days. After that, people in automobiles could more easily drive on these roads.

The modern highways came last. In the 1950s President Eisenhower came up with the idea of making a cross-country highway. He knew that good roads would be important to move people and supplies quickly from one part of the country to another. The first part of this nationwide highway was Interstate 70 in Kansas. Today highways make it easy for Kansans to get from place to place.

